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\$42.3 million project transforms seniors' and veterans' care Perley and Rideau Seniors Village Housing Initiative creates seniors' village in two new buildings

STAFF WRITER

— The Ottawa Construction News

The Perley and Rideau Seniors' Village Housing Initiative is an innovative program that aims to meet the pressing needs for housing among both seniors and veterans, providing individualized support. The anticipated \$42.3 million project has been financed through the Ontario Infrastructure and Lands Corporation, the City of Ottawa, and The Perley and Rideau Veterans' Health Centre Foundation's \$5 million Building Choices, Enriching Lives capital fund-raising campaign.

The program to transform the Perley and Rideau Veterans' Health Centre into a seniors' village and a hub for the surrounding community is on schedule and eagerly anticipated by the community.

Aecon is the general contractor, working with project manager CBRE Ltd.

Two new buildings, currently named Building A and Building B, will offer three levels of living options and care through 139 studio, one and two-bedroom apartments, two-thirds of which will be offered at market rent and the remaining below market. Up to 30 per cent of the apartments have been designated for Canadian Forces veterans.

Building A will be five stories with 94 apartments – 29 one bedroom, 25 two bedroom, and 40 studio apartments. The studio apartments, for those who need more daily assistance and support, are oriented around four clusters of 10 units, with each cluster featuring a shared kitchen and dining area as well as other common spaces.

Building B will be three stories with 45 apartments – 41 one bedroom and four two bedroom, primarily focused for independent living. Every apartment will have a balcony, kitchen and laundry facilities.

Greg Fougère, the Perley and Rideau Veteran's Health Centre's CEO, says the seniors' village concept is based on the ideas of healthy aging within a village environment. "At the same time (in 2008) the Ministry of Health offered 'Aging at Home' funding which fit with our assisted living plan so we were awarded \$1.7 million annually towards this," he says. "With our aging population I suspect this is an area of funding that will continue to increase."

Within the concept, planners reviewed functional program concepts, resulting in the cluster living design," Fougère said. "At this stage people can't stay at home any longer but don't need a long-term care bed. Many still want to be involved and some don't," says Fougère. "Elements like the shared kitchen space will allow those who want to help to be involved with meal preparation, or it can be fully done for them."

Assisted Living Program services include personal care, mobility assistance, and medication prompting and are available 24/7. Homemaking services include shopping, cleaning and meal preparation and reassurance services including checks to ensure client health and safety as required.

The buildings will also feature a large events room, a theatre, a fitness centre designed for seniors and a chapel. The ground floor will include 4,000 sq. ft. of retail space for senior-related retail and services, along



with assisted living and housing administration offices.

With a goal of becoming a centre of excellence for dementia care, Fougère says this cluster living, creating communities within the community, is both unique and key in keeping people engaged. "We have 375 volunteers right now who range from children to seniors. There is a great opportunity here for residents here to engage and to act as volunteers as well."

CBRE Ltd. senior project manager Janet Page says her primary role is to liaise between the client and project team to facili-

tate communication. "Completion of a project on time and within budget is always our goal so the project team tries to mitigate errors that may come up and where that can't happen, to reset the schedule and advise everyone accordingly."

While it might be assumed construction under a longer timeframe (construction work commenced in November of 2011) allows things to flow more smoothly, Page says longer contracts sometimes present greater challenges because they are

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Perley and Rideau

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awarded so far in advance of work being required and one delay can cause a domino affect throughout the project.

The other challenge is conducting work at what is a very busy centre without interfering with day-to-day operations. “We’re working on hardscaping and landscaping right now and trying not to get in the way of resident and day program traffic,” Page says. “And while there might be opportunities to get work done more easily at night without that traffic, the Perley is very aware they are residents in the community and want to be respectful of other residents so we conduct our work within the bylaws for noise to avoid disrupting the community as much as possible.”

Page says regular newsletters inform residents, staff and the community about the construction status. “This project will have such an impact on the community,” she says. “Think of building a home for someone and how important it is to understand their needs and wants and communicate progress to them. Now imagine building a home for 150 people and you understand how important communication is.”

The Perley and Rideau has had a community liaison committee in place since the 1990s – before any construction ever began – to ensure neighbouring community input. “People understand this project is needed but we want to be sure it is constructed in a way that is respectful to the community and responsive so we certainly address any concerns or issues that arise,” Fougère says.

Ian Hawkes from Aecon says his company has been involved in the project’s design work and value engineering since about 2010. “Value for the money is important to our clients, as is ensuring a good



traffic management plan with minimal disruption of the occupied campus,” he says. “All our trades have done a great job of being very respectful and conscious of this throughout the work.”

Fougère says he is impressed with Aecon’s safety initiatives, evident from the signage, right through to new workers’ orientation.

Hawkes says 85 workers are currently on site in Building A, but that figure will rise to 110 at its peak, and 45 workers are in Building B. “The actual construction is moving along very well,” he said. “Bellai Brothers Construction Ltd. was able to get the superstructure completed five weeks early which has certainly helped keep things moving.”

Building A was recently topped off and Building B is 85 per cent complete, with a target date for occupancy for Building A in March 2013 and Building B in October.

Fougère says it has been wonderful to see the buildings going up so quickly. “This is a 15-year vision that really began in 2010 so it’s hard to wait to see it unfolding. We have 250 veterans here, mostly men, and many are very interested in the project – taking photos, asking questions. We use the newsletter to keep everyone up to speed on what is happening, especially what they can’t see because they are all very interested and proud of what is being built.”

Fougère says among the amenities specifically chosen for the residents include a coffee shop for people watching, a full accredited pharmacy, dental and hearing centres and a primary care centre which is still being negotiated.

The Perley Rideau has a long history in the region through its long-term care accommodations for 250 veterans and 200 residents, along with its special approach program for people living with dementia, an adult day services program, post-hospital stay convalescent program, a 12-bedroom guest house providing respite care for up to 90 days annually, and assisted living serv-

ices for high-risk seniors.

Acknowledging tenants’ challenges, each unit has 36” wide doors to spacious rooms with flooring materials chosen for low resistance to wheel and foot traffic. Living spaces are open concept for clear visual and physical communication, bathrooms allow for a five foot turning space and barrier free shower access and kitchens have been designed for 360 degree turning of a wheelchair and for full functioning in a seated position.

Hallways are 5’6” wide – enough for two wheelchairs to pass; elevators are service-sized; building entrances are all grade-related without steps or ramps, and connected to a network of outdoor paths and scooter storage space.

The 11-acre property will be restored with a pond viewing area for wildlife in the southeast corner, garden sitting areas and courtyards.

Designed to LEED silver standards (though not seeking formal certification), the buildings feature higher insulation values, geothermal energy, maximized day lighting, low VOC materials, recycling areas and a strict policy on waste and recycling management for construction debris.

Dan Clapin, managing director of the Perley Rideau Foundation, says: “Our goal is to embrace the projects of the Perley Rideau so when the concept became reality our question was ‘how can we help?’”

The foundation engaged three honorary co-chairs who, through their interest and public faces, could draw attention to the project. Those co-chairs are Marguerite (Grete) Hale – 2006 Order of Canada recipient, Gen. (retired) Rick Hillier, and the late Barbara Ann Scott-King. “After that we began our next phase in which we seek out our top 10 to 15 donors who will give 60 to 70 per cent of our goal,” says Clapin. “Part of the project design includes naming opportunities for the entire buildings – that is why they are currently referred to as Buildings A and B - for individual floors, or specific areas. Some will make outright donations or they will contribute over a three to five year period.”

For more information visit www.perleyrideau.ca or to lend your support visit the special Building Choices, Enriching Lives capital campaign website at www.buildingchoices.ca.

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